



Primed to perform, trusted to teach

Position statement on libraries in music teaching institutions

Music is a universal language that belongs to everybody. It enables us to reach a deeper sense of our existence and to express ourselves beyond rational boundaries. Music is an essential part of being human.

Music plays a crucial role in our society. Its ability to build bridges between people from different social and cultural backgrounds is of utmost value. It is an important part of our cultural heritage and imparts a feeling of unity and belonging. Culture and democracy are interdependent. In addition, the music sector contributes significantly to the GDP of a country.

Music teaching institutions educate new generations of talented musicians, devoted music teachers and respected researchers. Students trained in these institutions will become ambassadors for music in the cultural fabric of their society.

Music holds a unique position within libraries, as it is a language with its own notation system and its own forms of publication. Sheet music, whether in printed or digitised form, is the principal type of material in a music library, but the library will be significantly enriched by complementary material such as literature, journals, audio- and video-recordings, and reference databases.

In order to provide a good service for students and researchers at a music academy, the librarians need to possess both the ability to read music and a substantial knowledge of music history, repertoire and terminology. Subject-specific knowledge is vital, not only for reference work, but in order to manage such areas as acquisitions, cataloguing or interlibrary loans. A pamphlet about the Sibelius Academy Library says that "... the Library is a notable representative of the Academy's high level of expertise in music".

Over the years, the role of the librarian at a music academy has consequently expanded to embrace the need for additional qualifications to meet new demands, not least because of the introduction of the Bologna Process and the new discipline "artistic research".

The Bologna Process asserts that information literacy is one of the generic skills that should be a part of all educational programmes. As a result, the music librarian has been called upon to play a pedagogical role. There are many views as to what information literacy means in a music context, offering the possibility of many varied and innovative approaches.

Artistic research is a young academic discipline that is still looking to find its form. It has its own methodologies, reporting processes, and discourse. Artistic research is subjective, narrative, and reflective. The librarian at a music academy, who is well-acquainted with academic conventions, provides valuable assistance when it comes to bridging the gap

between the artistic field and academia. Music librarians facilitate the choice of appropriate metadata and online resources; impart knowledge about electronic publishing and open access; and assist with qualitative assessment and bibliometrics. Templates and evaluation guidelines must be adapted to artistic research. Since artistic works are seldom purely text-based, a special expertise in copyright law as it applies to music is often required. “Appendices” containing sheet music and audio-visual materials are as important as the text, if not more. All of the aforementioned competencies are included in the professional domain of a librarian.

Roger Flury, President 2010–2013 of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres has summarized the role of a music librarian like this:

“The music librarian is too often the unsung hero of the music profession, but any musician or music scholar will tell you that without the library foundation and the professional services that it provides, the platform and pillars of music would collapse. One cannot survive without the other.”